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C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 000857

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [RRB](#) [GA](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIAN FORCES IN CONTROL OF MILITARY BASE,
OPPOSITION DELAYS PLANS TO BLOCK ROADS

REF: TBILISI 852

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) reported that at 1440 local time the mutineers at the Mukhravani military base surrendered. The soldiers involved have surrendered and laid down their weapons and the MOIA is in control of the base. According to the media, President Saakashvili has entered the base together with the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defense. One of the senior base officials, Mamuka Giorgashvili, is in custody and being transported to Tbilisi. Just prior to the surrender, President Saakashvili addressed the country saying that the mutineers had been given a deadline to lay down their weapons and stressed that the mutiny at Mukhravani was an isolated incident. Saakashvili also noted that those involved in the mutiny had links with Russia.

¶2. (C) Earlier in the day, the MOIA showed a video of the organizers outlining their strategy to overthrow the government, which included arresting senior government officials, capturing strategic assets such as the airport, and bringing 5000 Russian troops into undisputed Georgian territory. The Minister of Foreign Affairs told the Ambassador that the government had uncovered the plot and began arresting organizers on May 4. The Foreign Minister will address the diplomatic corps at 1800 local time. EUMM, OSCE, and UNOMIG all report no new movements along the boundaries. The leaders of radical opposition have said they have delayed their plans to blockade roads out of Tbilisi as a result of this incident. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (C) Further to reftel, At 1415 local time May 5, one MOD official was given permission to enter the Mukhravani base to start negotiations. During negotiations the mutineers scaled back their demands, and have now surrendered entirely. Once the revolt had ended President Saakashvili entered the base to talk with those still in the facility.

¶4. (C) In a press conference earlier in the day, MOIA showed a video tape of one of the purported organizers of the revolt at Mukhravani having lengthy discussions on a scenario for the revolt including arresting senior government officials, capturing strategic assets such as the airport, Chancellery and Parliament, and strategic roads into and out of the city. The organizer also notes that 5000 Russian soldiers would enter Georgia as a scaring tactic.

¶5. (C) The Minister of Foreign Affairs told the Ambassador that the MOIA had uncovered the plot and began arresting organizers on the evening of May 4. The FM said that most officers involved were apparently dismissed from the army following the Rose Revolution. The group reached out to active duty military units and officers in hopes of garnering support. It does not appear they were successful in doing so. The battalion at Mukhravani is from Gori and has 38 upgraded T-72 tanks and 20 armored personnel carriers in its

possession. All other military installations appear calm. Both MOIA and MOD Special Forces units were mobilized in response to the crisis. The Foreign Minister will hold a briefing for the diplomatic corps at 1800 local time.

¶6. (SBU) UNOMIG, OSCE, and EUMM report no unusual activities at the administrative boundaries with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

¶7. (SBU) Tbilisi traffic is currently in gridlock due to the rain and ongoing protests in the center of the city. The opposition held a special meeting to determine if they would continue with plans to block the major thoroughfares in and out of Tbilisi. In response to the security situation, opposition leaders have announced that they intend to delay blocking the roads. Protesters remain in their original positions at Parliament and the Public Broadcaster's building. However, soon after, the main leaders of the opposition, including Iraklia Alasania, addressed the press claiming that this was a staged show and a "virtual uprising" aimed at obstructing opposition plans for May 5.

TEFFT